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REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Draft text submitted by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Rogatien Biaou (Benin)

Review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

A. Overall considerations

1. The Commission takes note of the reports of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[1] and on development of a vulnerability index for small island developing States.[2]

2. The Commission on Sustainable Development recalls the decision of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session on the modalities for the full and comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.[3] In particular, the Commission notes the importance of the two-day special session to be convened immediately preceding the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, in 1999, for an in-depth assessment and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action, as reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 52/202.

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[1] E/CN.17/1998/7 and Add.1-9.

[2] A/53/65-E/1998/5.

[3] Resolution S-19/2, annex, para. 71.

3. The Commission urges small island developing States to continue and enhance their preparations for the seventh session of the Commission and the 1999 special session, and calls upon the international community, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental bodies to provide assistance to small island developing States for practical and concrete actions. Noting the work already begun by the small island developing States and regional organizations and institutions in that regard, the Commission invites the international community, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental bodies to support regional initiatives and to collaborate in partnership with the regional organizations and institutions to speed up preparations for the review.

4. In the light of paragraph 24 of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,[4] the Commission encourages all small island developing States to put in place national sustainable development strategies that take into account the links between economic, social and environmental indicators and policies on an ongoing basis, and invites bilateral donors and United Nations agencies and organizations, as well as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, to join in the promotion of coordinated capacity-building programmes to support the development and implementation of national, subregional and regional strategies. The implementation of strategies for sustainable development will be primarily the responsibility of small island developing States, with the essential support of the international community. The Commission urges proper consideration of the need for capacity-building to develop and implement strategies for sustainable development at the proposed donors' conference.

5. The Commission reaffirms the important coordinating role played by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and its efforts to assist small island developing States with the review process, and calls on the Department to remain actively involved in the preparatory process leading up to the special session, including effective coordination with all relevant sectors of the international community in taking any necessary measures to provide support and assistance to small island developing States.

6. The donors' conference on small island developing States to be held in early 1999 is welcomed as a useful forum for assistance in the pursuit of small island States sustainable development objectives, and the Commission encourages all small island States to fully utilize the donors' conference to that end. The Commission recommends that the envisaged donors' conference consider proposed project portfolios that reflect progress to implement the relevant components of the Programme of Action. The international donor community is urged to engage actively with small island developing States during the conference to achieve realistic and positive outcomes and concrete assistance for all small island developing States, including the sharing of updated information on current donor activities in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Secretary-General's preparations for the donors' conference will also need to take account of and work with ongoing national and regional round-table and consultative groups.

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[4] Resolution S-19/2, annex.

7. The Programme of Action recognizes that small island developing States are a special case for both environment and development because they are ecologically fragile and vulnerable, and because they face particular constraints in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. In that regard, the Commission recalls that the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.[3] It was also noted at the special session that the considerable efforts being made at the national and regional levels need to be supplemented by effective financial support from the international community, and by facilitating the transfer of environmentally sound technologies in accordance with paragraph 34.14 (b) of Agenda 21.[5] The Commission notes that the support of the international community is vital. The 1999 overall review of the implementation of the Programme of Action should include an assessment of changes in the financial resource flows to small island developing States, both overall and by sector, including private as well as public resources. That review will help to determine whether the international community is providing effective means, including adequate, predictable, new and additional resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action in accordance with chapter 33 of Agenda 21.[6]

8. The Commission calls upon national Governments, or regional intergovernmental organizations, as appropriate, to help ensure effective coordination of donor and recipient government efforts, which is a basic prerequisite for successful development assistance.

B. Climate change and sea level rise

9. The Commission recalls the well recognized vulnerability of small island developing States to global climate change, and the likelihood that accompanying sea level rise will have severe and negative effects on the environment, biological diversity, economy and infrastructures of small island developing States and on the health and welfare of their peoples. It recognizes that the ability of small island developing States to respond to the threat of climate change is hampered by the lack of institutional, scientific and technical capacity, as well as by the lack of financial resources.

10. The Commission recognizes the need to strengthen the response capability of small island developing States by education, training and public awareness-raising, and through regional and international cooperation. The Commission urges the international community to commit adequate financial and technical resources and assistance to help small island developing States in their ongoing efforts at the national and regional levels to build effective response measures, and to strengthen their institutional and human resource capacity to

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[5] Ibid., para. 72.

[6] See Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 94.I.18 and Corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, Part Two, sect. III, para. 1.

cope with the effects of climate change and sea level rise. The Commission calls on the international community to commit appropriate and additional support for the regional organizations and institutions to strengthen their effectiveness, in particular in support for ongoing regional assessments of probable environmental changes and impacts, mitigation and adaptation strategies; development and dissemination of guidelines for coastal protection and management as well as in other relevant areas; use and substitution of new and renewable sources of energy; and in the capacity-building programmes of the regional organizations and institutions.

11. The Commission notes that climate change will also have socio-economic consequences for small island developing States, and encourages them, in collaboration with regional organizations and institutions, to undertake integrated assessment studies of the effects of global warming and sea level rise on socio-economic issues, including population concentration and location infrastructure, food security, and effects on human health and culture.

12. The Commission notes that there is a critical need to further scientific and technical studies and research on the climate change phenomenon and its impacts in relation to small island developing States, and calls on the international community to continue to undertake and to assist small island developing States in such studies and research.

13. The Commission welcomes the adoption and the opening for signature of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and urges the international community, and in particular Annex 1 Parties to the Convention, to become Parties to the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible in order to facilitate its early entry into force.

C. Management of wastes

14. The Commission notes the difficulties and constraints confronting small island developing States in the management of wastes and in their efforts to minimize and prevent pollution. The Commission is concerned that significant work is needed at all levels to strengthen the capacities of small island developing States and to implement the actions, policies and measures identified in the Programme of Action. Since current waste disposal problems and issues present immediate challenges to island communities, the Commission calls on the international community to support the efforts of small island developing States in the development of effective institutional capacity to cope with those issues.

15. The Commission takes note that one of the main obstacles for small island developing States is the lack of an integrated or comprehensive approach to waste management strategies, and encourages small island developing States Governments to focus appropriate priority on building integrated and environmentally sound waste management strategies and policies that involve all sectors and industries.

16. The Commission recognizes the ongoing work that is being undertaken by the United Nations system and by regional organizations and institutions in this

process, and supports the continuation of such work in an integrated manner across small island developing States regions. Noting the important role played by the regional bodies in developing and coordinating regional waste management programmes, which often provide the framework for national action, the Commission encourages regional cooperation within respective small island developing States regions for the establishment of regional coordinating mechanisms for waste management in those regions where none currently exist, and calls on the international community and the United Nations system to continue to provide appropriate support for those efforts.

17. Noting that waste and pollution from ships, in particular the potential for major oil spills, represent an important concern for small island developing States in view of their consequences for the marine and coastal environment and biological diversity, the Commission proposes that the international community, in collaboration with regional organizations and institutions, provide effective support for international and regional initiatives to protect small island developing States regions from ship-borne wastes and pollution, including the development of facilities for receiving ship-borne waste in ports. The Commission calls upon all countries to adhere to and enforce existing International Maritime Organization regulations.

18. The Commission urges small island developing States to give early consideration to becoming Parties to important international agreements that cover waste management and disposal, such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and Their Disposal, as well as relevant regional agreements, such as the Waigani Convention to Ban the Importation of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes in the South Pacific Region.

19. The Commission calls on the international community, in particular the United Nations system and the donor community, to continue to support small island developing States efforts in this area, in particular in the development of sound waste management infrastructure, including through financial resources and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; building adequate legislative frameworks; and the strengthening of institutional capacity.

D. Freshwater resources

20. The Commission notes that for small island developing States, the conservation and sustainable management of freshwater resources is fundamentally dependent on sound knowledge and understanding of the water resources potential, and that there is a vital link to the management of coastal and marine resources and waste.

21. The lack of an adequate knowledge base and ongoing monitoring programmes, often compounded by the small size, remoteness, physical structure and rapid urbanization of small island developing States, exacerbates difficulties in management and adequate supply of freshwater resources, particularly in the smaller islands and coral atoll communities. The Commission encourages small island developing States, with the vital support of the international community, to establish and strengthen, as appropriate, geographic information system

(GIS)-based data collection, storage, analysis and retrieval systems, including monitoring programmes, and appropriate institutional frameworks, including legislation and national coordinating mechanisms for the management of freshwater and groundwater resources, and to give high priority to the immediate development and implementation of appropriate national water action plans. The Commission notes the importance of the World Meteorological Organization's World Hydrological Cycle Observing System, in particular the Caribbean Hydrological Cycle Observing System.

22. The Commission encourages small island developing States to develop an effective integrated approach to freshwater management, involving the full collaboration of all interested stakeholders, in particular women, to ensure the sustainable utilization of water resources, through appropriate demand management policies, including pricing. This should include cross-sectoral planning and cooperation between relevant sectors and industries, such as land and waste management, tourism, and industrial and other sectors, as well as the active participation of the private sector and local communities. The Commission encourages small island developing States Governments to prioritize public awareness programmes in efforts to promote environmentally sustainable use of freshwater and coastal waters.

23. The Commission notes the importance of regional and interregional cooperation on freshwater issues, and recommends greater cooperation and exchange of technical information, monitoring and modelling methodologies, and expertise within and among small island developing States regions in further efforts to promote sound water management programmes for the benefit of small island developing States. The international community is urged to support the efforts of small island developing States, including the implementation of GIS-based information and data systems and training programmes for key personnel.

24. Noting the ongoing work of United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, in their assistance programmes to small island developing States within the context of implementation of the Programme of Action, the Commission encourages the continuation of those efforts in conjunction with the regional organizations and institutions. The Commission calls on the international community to continue to provide support for regional and national efforts to promote sound water resources assessment and monitoring procedures, demand management and policy frameworks, including the transfer and development of appropriate and cleaner production technologies for small island developing States.

E. Land resources

25. Small island developing States face special constraints in the management of land resources, particularly of agricultural, forestry and mineral resources. The Commission notes the efforts made so far at all levels in addressing the key issues identified in the Programme of Action, and notes in particular the significant gaps which remain in many areas, including in the knowledge base and understanding of the various land-based resources potential. Recognizing the

environmental and cost impacts of land use on other sectors, such as water and forest resources, the Commission encourages small island developing States to implement a comprehensive and integrated approach to land-use management, involving all sectors, especially those at the community level and relevant stakeholders, in the process.

26. The Commission encourages small island developing States to prioritize institutional strengthening and capacity-building measures at the national and regional levels, including the development of national and regional legislative frameworks and sustainable long-term land management plans. It is essential that those be developed from the basis of sound knowledge and proper understanding of resources. In that respect, the Commission calls on the international community to continue to support the efforts of small island developing States, including through the provision of technical assistance and transfer of appropriate technologies for sustainable agriculture, forestry and mineral development practices and environmental impact assessments. Small island developing States are encouraged to create appropriate environment and resource databases, including GIS, which would be an invaluable basis for all aspects of land-use planning and management, including soil erosion control, to minimize environmental degradation, and to continue their efforts for public awareness programmes at all levels of society on the benefits of a sustainable approach to land-use practices. The international community is urged to support the efforts of small island developing States, including the implementation of GIS-based information and data systems and training programmes for key personnel.

27. The Commission notes the important role played by United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations in promoting an improved approach to land-use management in small island developing States. The Commission calls on the international community to help to strengthen the ability of existing regional institutions to assist small island developing States in improving their land-use management. Where effective regional institutions do not exist, consideration should be given to establishing such institutions with the assistance of the international community.

F. Biodiversity resources

28. The Commission takes note of the uniqueness and extreme fragility of biological diversity, both terrestrial and marine, in small island developing States, and in the light of their capacity constraints, of the disproportionate responsibility facing small island developing States in the conservation of those biological resources. It acknowledges the necessity for further action at all levels to realize the full implementation of the relevant parts of the Programme of Action and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

29. Noting that a lack of appropriately qualified and trained personnel is a significant obstacle to the vital management of those natural resources, the Commission encourages small island developing States to set a high priority on national technological and human capacity-building within strong institutional frameworks to address that imbalance. Small island developing States are encouraged to put in place effective conservation measures for the protection of

biological diversity, with particular emphasis on management and effective monitoring and control of existing activities that may have serious environmental consequences, such as deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices and overfishing.

30. The Commission notes the importance of regional cooperation in the conservation of biological diversity, and encourages small island developing States to develop strong national, regional and interregional networks for cooperation at all levels of biodiversity conservation, including the exchange of data and expertise. Noting ongoing regional programmes in some small island developing States for the designation of conservation areas, the Commission urges those small island developing States that have not done so to designate and develop terrestrial and marine protected areas at an early stage for the conservation of biological diversity with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability.

31. The Commission notes ongoing work and programmes currently being implemented by small island developing States and by the international and regional organizations, and urges the international community to continue to provide support to small island developing States for national and regional capacity-building in their efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of those important natural resources. In particular, the Commission recommends that international support include technical assistance in the development of legislative and regulatory frameworks, technology transfer and appropriate training programmes. International support should also include technical assistance in the development of measures to establish intellectual property rights within the context of protection of biodiversity resources, and the Commission notes the development of programmes to assist developing countries in this area.

32. Given the important role of small island developing States as custodians of a significant proportion of the world's biological diversity, the Commission stresses the importance of enabling small island developing States to participate in the global negotiation processes on biological diversity. In that regard, the Commission notes the significance of the Trust Fund under the Convention on Biological Diversity in supporting the participation of developing countries, including small island developing States.

G. National institutions and administrative capacity

33. The Commission notes that the process of building institutional and administrative capacity for the effective achievement of sustainable development is a complex process, and that for small island developing States, efforts have been hampered by a severe lack of financial and technical resources and skills. The Commission urges the international community to assist small island developing States in strengthening their national institutional frameworks, including - where they do not exist - the establishment, with adequate staff and resources, of national coordinating mechanisms for the coordination of sustainable development policies and action plans.

34. The Commission encourages small island developing States who have not done so to enact the necessary legislative and administrative frameworks that will provide the basis of their national strategies and activities for sustainable development, including enhanced inter-agency cooperation and effective integration of environmental considerations in economic decision-making, and calls on the international community to assist their efforts in building national capacity through effective institutional and administrative reforms.

35. The Commission recognizes that small island developing States suffer from a lack of adequately skilled human resources. It also notes the importance of a highly skilled and effectively trained human resource base in the effective implementation and enforcement of sustainable development policies and measures. The Commission therefore calls on the international community and the United Nations system to continue to provide concrete assistance to small island developing States by providing appropriate training opportunities for both men and women and capacity-building programmes at all levels, such as the UNDP Capacity 21 programme, to enable effective national implementation of sustainable development strategies, especially in the context of the Programme of Action.

36. The Commission encourages regional and subregional cooperation in this area, in particular in the sharing of information and expertise on national institutional and administrative capacity-building for the benefit of small island developing States. The Commission calls on the international community to continue their support for the activities of the regional organizations and institutions, including through the provision of adequate financial resources.

37. The Commission expresses concern at current trends in the levels of external assistance for small island developing States in national institutions and administrative capacity, and appeals to the international donor community to provide assistance to small island developing States at levels necessary to support the implementation of the Programme of Action.

H. Regional institutions and technical cooperation

38. The Commission recognizes the necessity for regional organizations and institutions to play a strong and effective role in the implementation of the Programme of Action in small island developing States regions. Small island developing States are encouraged to increase their cooperation and support for regional organizations and institutions. The Commission notes that effective programme delivery will be enhanced through the continued clear identification of national priorities. The Commission notes that the work of existing regional organizations and institutions may need to be strengthened or supplemented where gaps are identified.

39. The Commission encourages existing regional organizations and institutions to continue their efforts to enhance their own effectiveness and delivery of services, including through focused and sustainable outcomes, increased regional and subregional cooperation and joint sharing of activities, and calls on the international community to support those efforts. The Commission calls on the regional organizations and institutions to enact appropriate screening measures

before programme delivery to ensure that their work programmes and activities realistically target the needs and priorities of small island developing States The Commission also invites regional organizations to monitor programme effectiveness.

40. The Commission views with concern the absence of permanent regional coordinating mechanisms in some regions of small island developing States, and invites States concerned to identify the most appropriate and effective means for addressing that situation.

I. Science and technology

41. The Commission recognizes the lack of skilled and qualified scientific and technical personnel in small island developing States due to small populations and lack of adequate educational and training facilities, and encourages small island developing States to accord high priority to science and technical education opportunities and programmes at all levels of development, including the strengthening of support for national and regional educational institutions It would be desirable for small island developing States to collaborate at the regional and subregional levels to share resources and information, including traditional and indigenous knowledge, in the development of sound networks amor scientific personnel. Small island developing States are also encouraged to promote a comprehensive approach and to support the strengthened linkages between educational and research institutions and all other sectors, and to actively engage the private sector in support for science development.

42. The Commission urges the international community to enhance international cooperation in the development and promotion of relevant environmentally sound technologies applicable to small island developing States, and - where appropriate - to make that a component of regional and international projects. The international community is encouraged to take necessary steps to facilitate the transfer of appropriate technologies to small island developing States, wherever appropriate, and to actively assist small island developing States in establishing regional centres for capacity-building and training. Noting the measures undertaken by the United Nations agencies in assisting small island developing States with the development of scientific resources, the international community and regional organizations and institutions are urged t take necessary measures for supporting small island developing States to implement active and effective science educational programmes.

43. The regional organizations and institutions are encouraged to better promote appropriate science and technology training programmes at the community level in small island developing States, and to share information, including th establishment and maintenance of information and databases on new and innovativ technologies appropriate to small island developing States. Furthermore, regional organizations and institutions are encouraged to develop and deploy information systems using appropriate technologies, such as remotely sensed data, GIS and the Internet/Intranet, as the delivery mechanism.

J. Human resource development

44. The very limited human resources and other constraints facing small island developing States and the difficulties that those constraints exert on their sustainable development objectives are recognized. The Commission acknowledges the efforts by small island developing States and the progress made, and encourages them to continue to accord high priority to the comprehensive development of a strong and effective human resource base in all fields and across all sectors, giving particular attention to building health standards and care, development of education with specific environmental components and awareness-raising, the empowerment of women, and the provision of adequate training opportunities for all sectors. The establishment of incentive measures would help to retain key personnel in the public sector. Human resource development is an essential component in building the institutional capacity of small island developing States for delivering sustainable development.

45. The Commission calls on regional organizations and institutions to enhance their support for small island developing States in the area of human resources development by specifically targeting the human resource needs of small island developing States in regional development programmes, including through the provision of practical, effective and specific training opportunities. The regional organizations and institutions are urged to assist small island developing States in systematically identifying their needs and priorities and to give adequate effect to those needs in project planning for development. Greater regional and subregional cooperation is encouraged for the joint sharing of resources, technologies and expertise, as well as at bilateral and multilateral levels.

46. The Commission notes the work undertaken by the United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and donors to address human resource needs of small island developing States in their funds and programmes, and invites them to continue to give priority to human resource development.

47. The Commission expresses concern at current trends in the levels of external assistance for small island developing States in human resource development, and appeals to the international donor community to provide assistance to small island developing States at levels necessary to support implementation of the Programme of Action.

48. The Commission recognizes the importance of the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme and the Small Island Developing States Information Network in the overall implementation of the Programme of Action, and noting the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Development Programme to operationalize the two programmes, encourages the continuation of those efforts, in cooperation with small island developing States Governments. The Commission further notes that the unavailability or insufficiency of financial resources is a main obstacle to the full and early operationalization of those programmes, especially of the Information Network, and invites the relevant organizations and the international community to provide support for their proper development.

K. Vulnerability index

49. The Commission recalls that a vulnerability index that takes account of the constraints arising from small size and environmental fragility, as well as the incidence of natural disasters on a national scale, and the consequent relationship of those constraints to economic vulnerability, would assist in defining the vulnerability of small island developirg States and in identifying the challenges to their sustainable development. The Commission notes the progress made on the index to date.

50. The Commission takes note of the report of the ad hoc expert group meeting on vulnerability indices for small island developing States,[7] and of its conclusion that as a group, small island developing States are more vulnerable than other groups of developing countries.

51. The Commission recalls General Assembly resolutions 52/202 and 52/210, as well as resolution 51/183, in which the Assembly requested the Committee for Development Planning,[8] at its thirty-second session, to formulate its views and recommendations on the report to be prepared by the Secretary-General on the vulnerability index for small island developing States, and to submit those views to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, through the Economic and Social Council, and to make the information available to the Commission. The Commission looks forward to the report of the Committee.

52. The Commission calls on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the regional commissions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant actors, to accord priority to the continuation of the quantitative and analytical work on the vulnerability of small island developing States, in keeping with the provisions of the Programme of Action and General Assembly resolutions 52/202 and 52/210.

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[7] A/53/65-E/1998/5, annex.

[8] Without prejudice to the reform efforts under resolution 50/227.